68th Annual Conference
May 16 – 19, 2013
Seaport Boston Hotel &
Seaport World Trade Center
Boston, Massachusetts

AAPOR
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

Asking Critical Questions
Toward a Sustainable Future for
Public Opinion and Social Research

Decision making in the 2012 Elections

Dean Bonner

Public Policy Institute of California

June 28, 2013 PAPOR Mini-Conference

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Asking Critical Questions
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Decision making in the 2012 Elections

- Validating Likely Voter Measures in 2012 Pre-Election Polling

- The Impact of the Presidential Debates on Undecided and Persuadable Voters

- The RAND Continuous 2012 Presidential Election Poll

- The Influence of Social Desirability in the Rise of Political Independents

Validating Likely Voter Measures in 2012 Pre-Election Polling

Jocelyn Kiley, *Pew Research Center*
Scott Keeter, *Pew Research Center*
Matt Frei, *Pew Research Center*
Seth Motel, *Pew Research Center*
Leah M. Christian, *Pew Research Center*
Michael Dimock, *Pew Research Center*
Michael P. McDonald, *George Mason University*
Matthew Berent, *Matt Berent Consulting*
Jon Krosnick, *Stanford University*

Validating Likely Voter Measures in 2012 Pre-Election Polling

Identifying Likely Voters

Modified Perry-Gallup index
Uses established correlates of vote propensity first developed and validated in 1950s & 60s

How well does the index work today?
At the individual level?
In the aggregate?
For different demographic groups?

Validating Likely Voter Measures in 2012 Pre-Election Polling

Identifying Voters and Nonvoters in Official Voting Records

Phone #: 9%
Phone # and name: 54%
Phone #, name, address: 37%

Match to marketing database

Phone #: 4%
Phone # and name: 28%
Phone #, name, address: 68%

Match to voter database

56% matched with voter records

Validating Likely Voter Measures in 2012 Pre-Election Polling

Identifying Voters and Nonvoters in Official Voting Records

Highly correlated with survey registration/turnout predictors	% Matched
Registered	**61**
Likely voter	62
Not likely voter	54
Not registered	**32**

Validating Likely Voter Measures in 2012 Pre-Election Polling

Likely Voter Index Performance

Matched sample registered voters	% of RVs	% Voted	Obama advantage
Total	100%	88%	+4.2
Score on 9-pt LV scale			
9	65%	94%	-2.4
8 < 9	15%	85%	+16.0
7 < 8	7%	86%	+12.4
6 < 7	5%	77%	+10.1
< 6	8%	51%	+23.3
Likely voters	85%	92%	+2.4

Validating Likely Voter Measures in 2012 Pre-Election Polling

Demographic Performance of Likely Voter Index

	Percent RV predicted likely	Predicted difference from overall	Actual difference from overall
Total	85%	--	--
Male	85%	0	-2
Female	85%	0	+1
White, non-Hispanic	86%	+1	+1
Black, non-Hispanic	88%	+3	+1
Hispanic	71%	-14	-16
Other/Refused	80%	-5	-7
18-24	63%	-22	-17
25-29	78%	-7	-11
30-39	78%	-7	-1
40-49	89%	+4	+2
50-64	90%	+5	+3
65+	91%	+6	+4

The Impact of the Presidential Debates on Undecided and Persuadable Voters

Curtiss Cobb, GfK Knowledge Networks
Charles DiSogra, Abt SRBI
Jordon Peugh, GfK Knowledge Networks
Sarah Dutton, CBS
Anthony Salvanto, CBS
Kathleen Connolley, GfK Knowledge Networks

The Impact of the Presidential Debates on Undecided and Persuadable Voters

CBS News Instant Polls

GfK

CBS sought to gage the <u>unfiltered</u> opinion of **undecided and persuadable voters** <u>immediately</u> after each debate and <u>prior</u> to being influenced by pundit commentary.

To Do So

✓ **Pre-identify registered voters that were:**

1. Undecided or persuadable
2. Intended to watch the debate
3. Agree to participate in follow-up survey immediately after the debate

✓ **Collect all the interviews simultaneously immediately after each debate concluded.**

✓ **Weight, analyze and report the data within the first two hours after each debate.**

✓ **Be scientifically rigorous and generalizable**

The Impact of the Presidential Debates on Undecided and Persuadable Voters

Re-Evaluating Winners and Losers

GfK
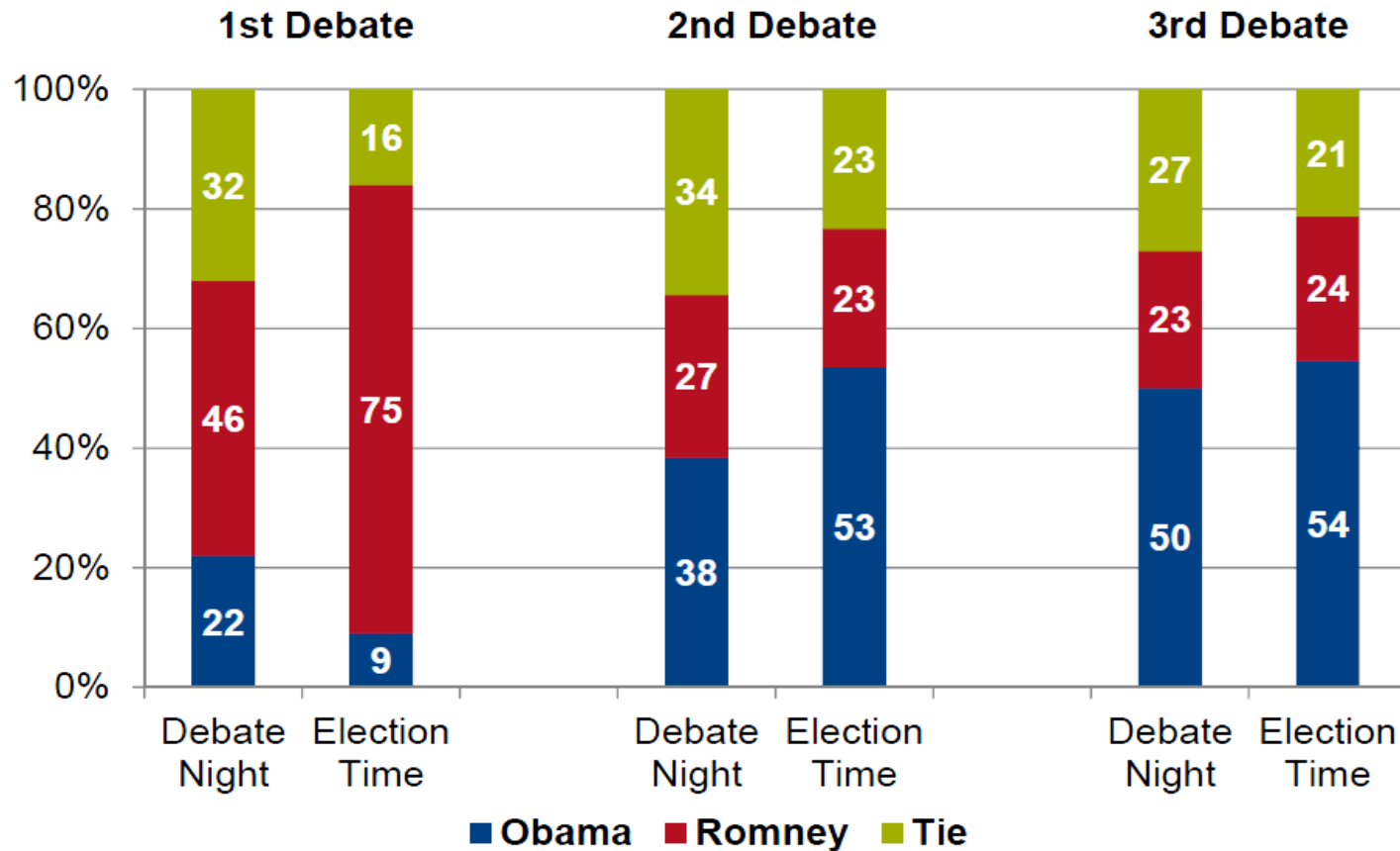
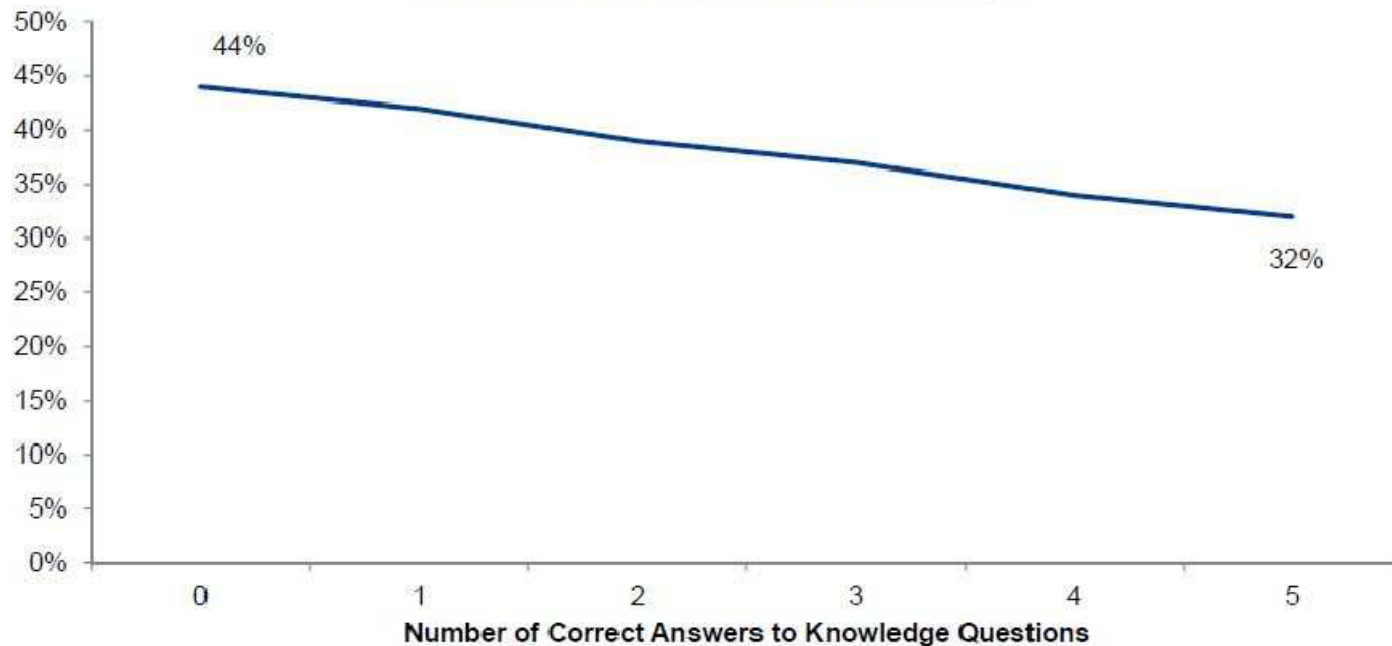### Election Day Re-Evaluation of 1st Debate Performance
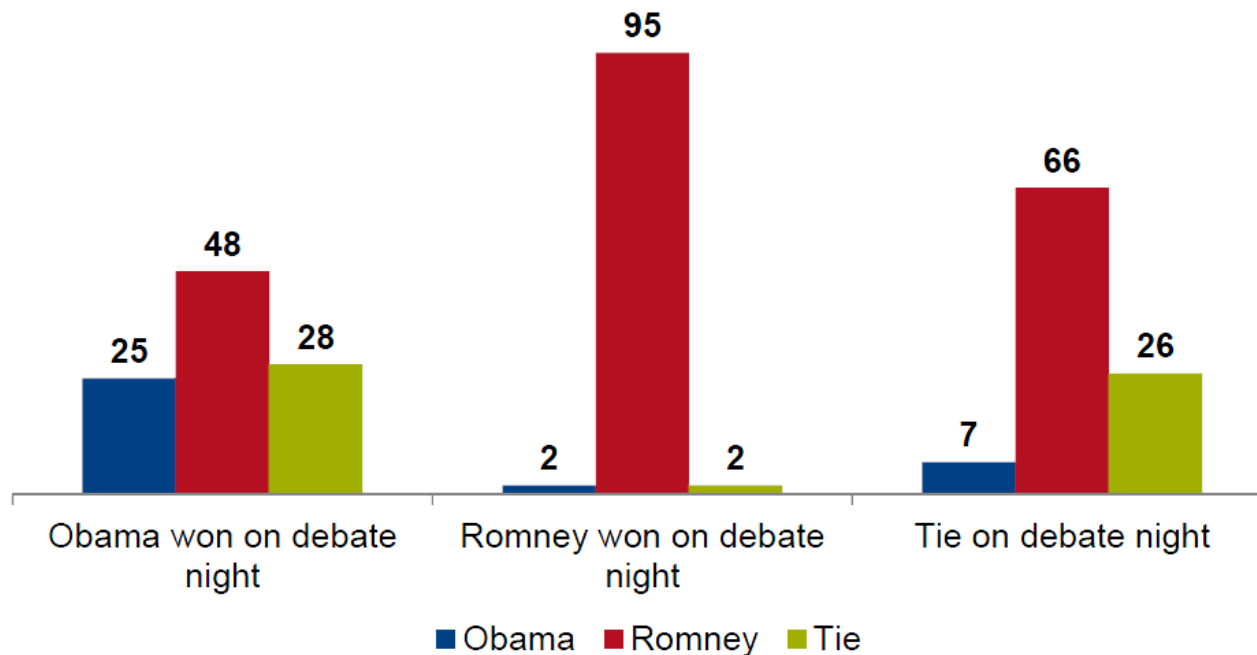
Obama won on debate night	Romney won on debate night	Tie on debate night
Obama: 25, Romney: 48, Tie: 28	Obama: 2, Romney: 95, Tie: 2	Obama: 7, Romney: 66, Tie: 26

■ Obama ■ Romney ■ Tie

The Impact of the Presidential Debates on Undecided and Persuadable Voters

Re-Evaluating Winners and Losers

GfK

Probability to Switch Evaluations

44%

32%

Number of Correct Answers to Knowledge Questions

Predicting Actual Vote

GfK

Asked "undecided and persuadable" debate watchers who they voted for/were going to vote for in our election time follow-up survey.

Used logistic regression to predict voting for Obama:

- Indicator variables for who panelists reported won debates in the CBS Instant Polls and the election time follow-up survey.
- Control for demographics, partisanship (party ID), and ideology (lib-con)

Predicted Probability of Voting for Obama

	CBS Instant Poll (Time 1)	Election Time Follow-up (Time 2)	Chi-Square
Thought Obama Won Debate	84%	68%	13.19***
TIE	36%	29%	0.53(ns)

The RAND Continuous 2012 Presidential Election Poll

Tania L. Gutsche, RAND Corporation
Arie Kapteyn, RAND Corporation
Erik Meijer, RAND Corporation
Bas Weerman, RAND Corporation

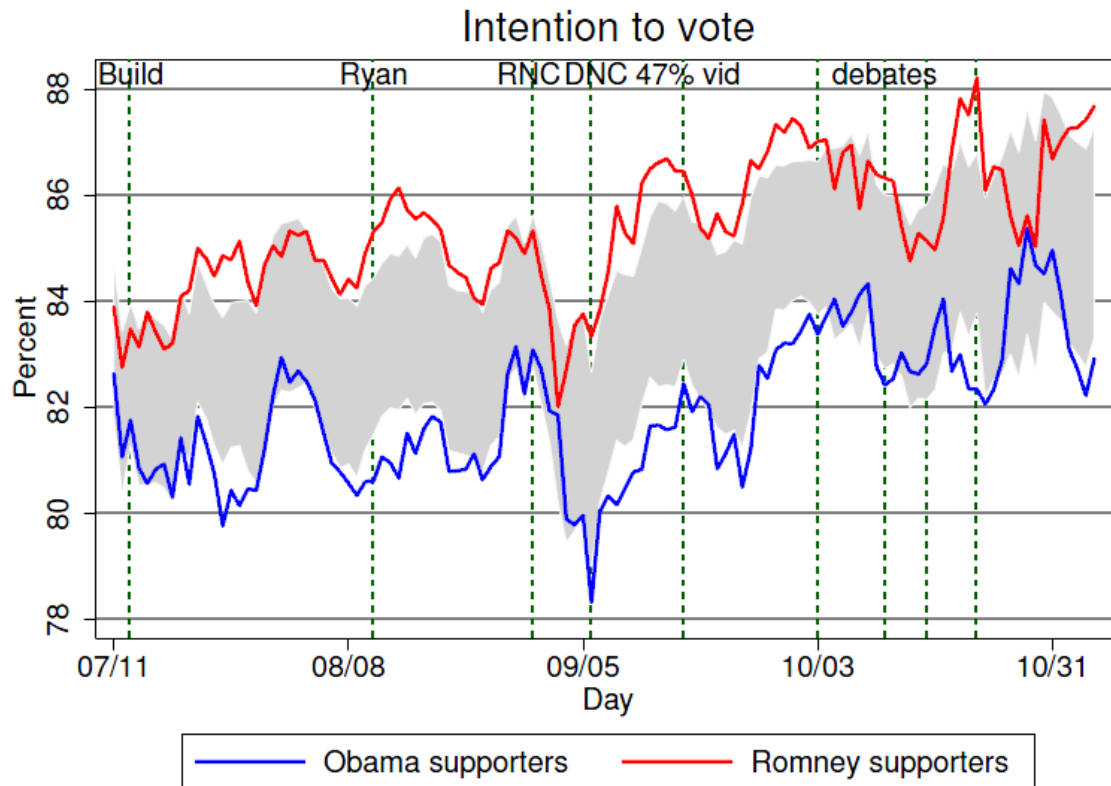# The RAND Continuous 2012 Presidential Election Poll

- Internet panel (RAND American Life Panel)
- Probabilistic questions
- Weighted on 2008 voting
- 3600 people in final panel
- Weighted daily and was poststratified
- WHY probabilistic questions?
  - No likely voter model
  - No undecideds
  - Can detect small shifts in preferences

The RAND Continuous 2012 Presidential Election Poll

Figure 3: Average stated intention to vote by candidate preference

Note. An estimate within the shaded area indicates that the difference is not statistically significant at the 5% level. See text for a brief description of the indicated events.

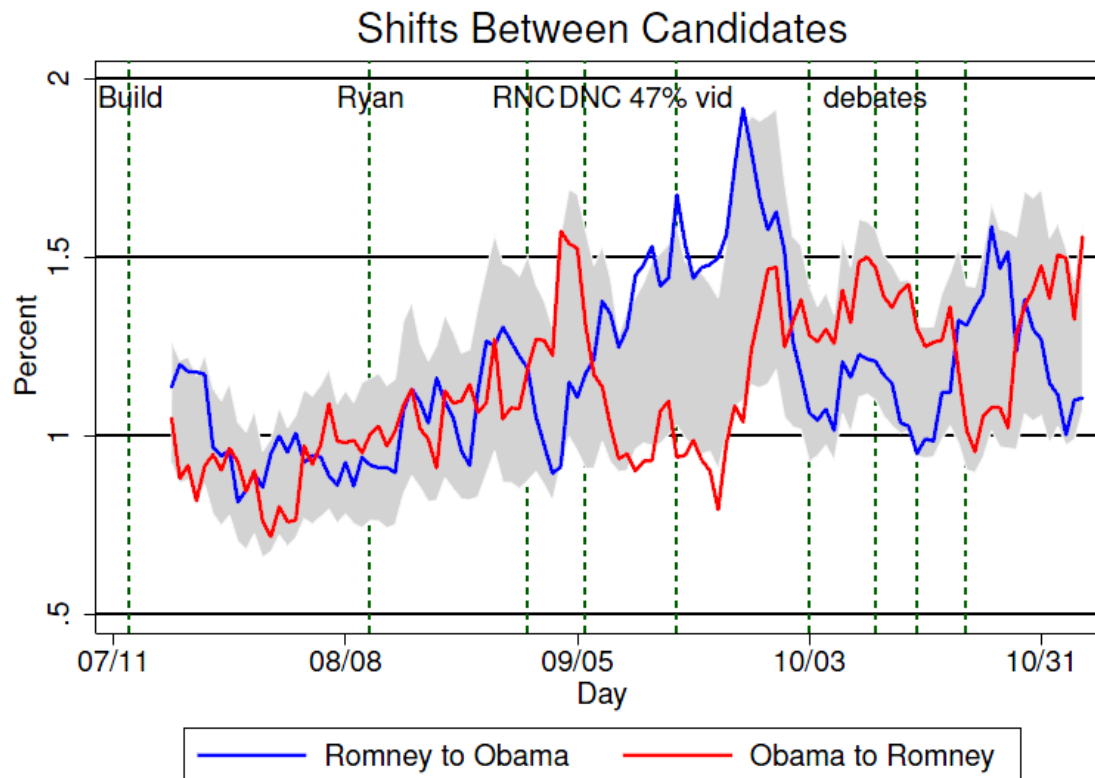# The RAND Continuous 2012 Presidential Election Poll

Figure 4: Forecasted share of the votes for Obama and Romney
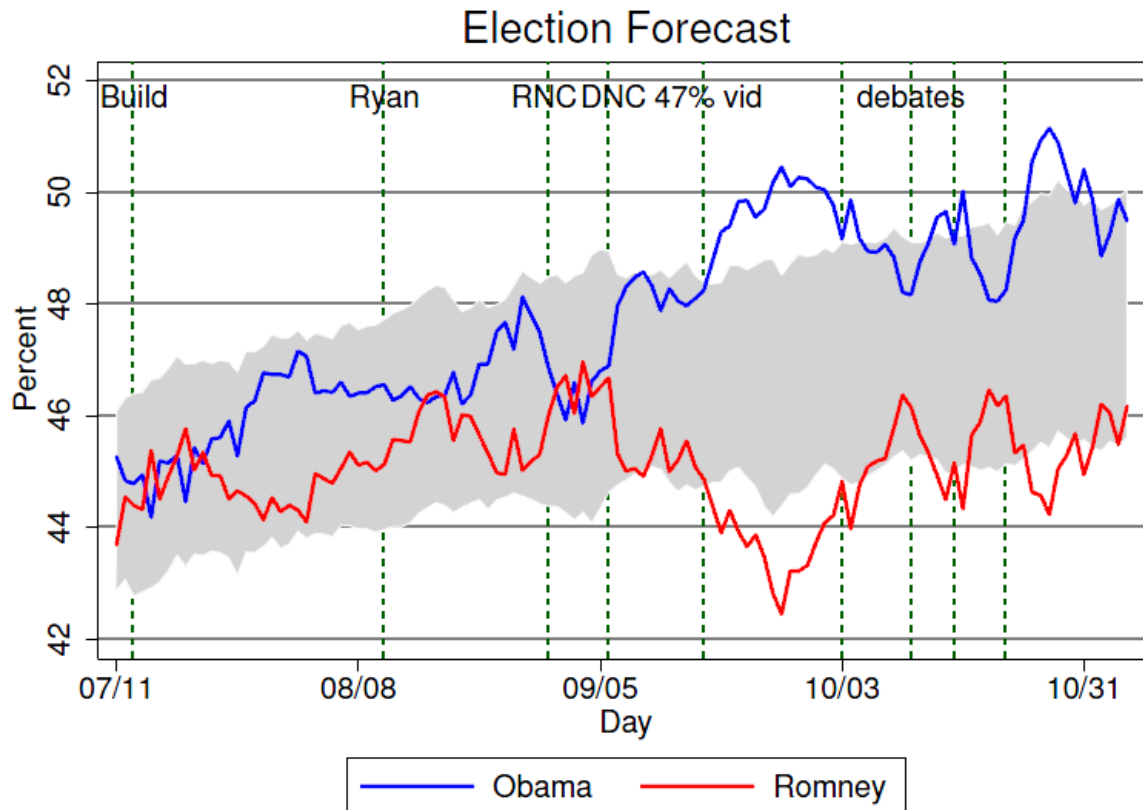
Note. An estimate within the shaded area indicates that the difference is not statistically significant at the 5% level. See text for a brief description of the indicated events.

The RAND Continuous 2012 Presidential Election Poll

Figure 5: Average changes in reported likelihood of voting for Obama or Romney

Shifts Between Candidates

Note. An estimate within the shaded area indicates that the difference is not statistically significant at the 5% level. See text for a brief description of the indicated events.

The RAND Continuous 2012 Presidential Election Poll

Figure 6: Average subjective likelihoods that Obama or Romney will win the election
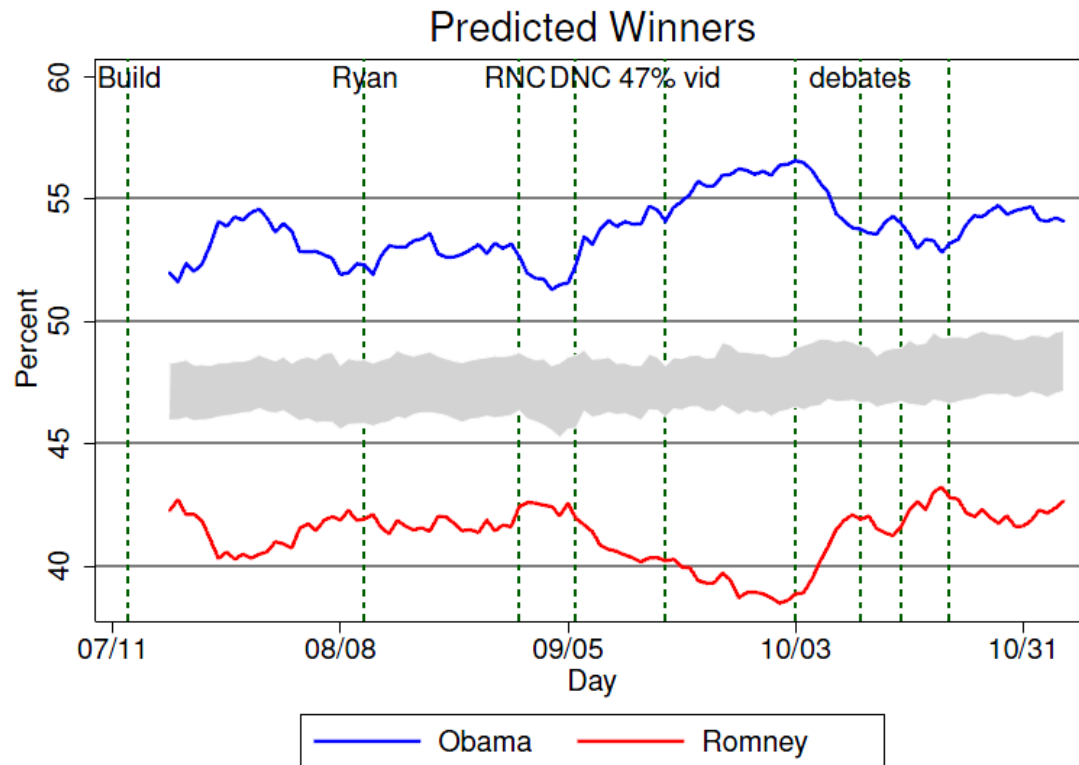
Note. An estimate within the shaded area indicates that the difference is not statistically significant at the 5% level. See text for a brief description of the indicated events.

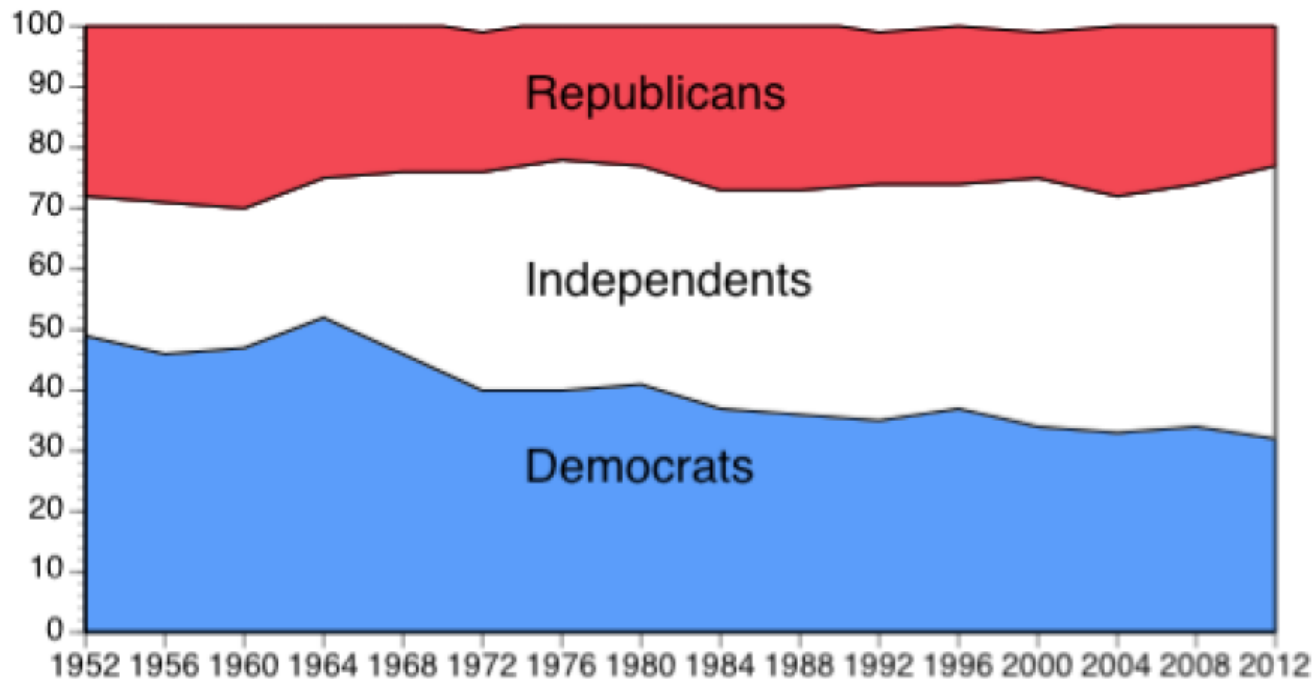# The Influence of Social Desirability in the Rise of Political Independents

Samara Klar, Northwestern University
Yanna Krupnikov, Northwestern University

The Influence of Social Desirability in the Rise of Political Independents

Partisanship Over Time

Figure 1.1: Distribution of U.S. Party Identification, 1952-2012

Self-reported political independence is increasing over time.

Image : *The Social Bases of Political Parties* by Ken Janda

The Influence of Social Desirability in the Rise of Political Independents

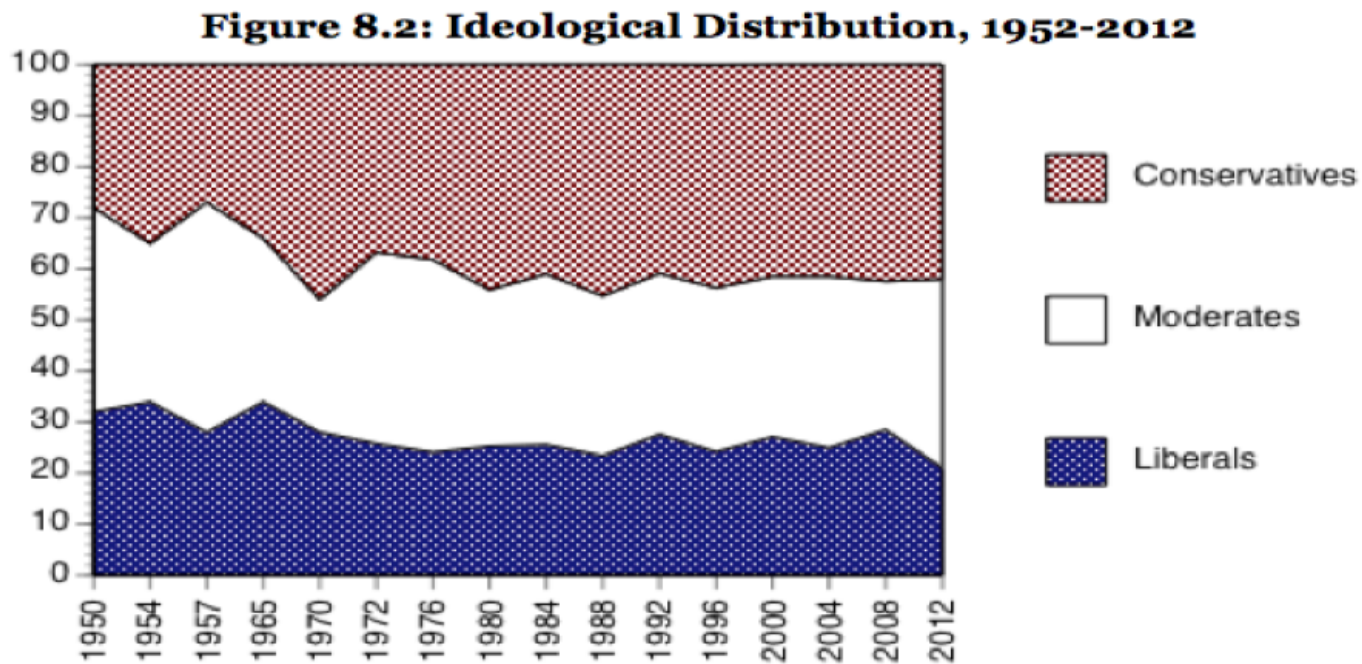What Explains the Increase in Independents?

- **Ideological Shifts?**

Figure 8.2: Ideological Distribution, 1952-2012

Conservatives
Moderates
Liberals

Image : *The Social Bases of Political Parties* by Ken Janda... **buy it on itunes for $2.99!!**

The Influence of Social Desirability in the Rise of Political Independents

Why the Increase in Independents?

The Influence of Social Desirability Bias

- Changes in reported partisanship are the result of social pressures.

- Partisanship is becoming socially undesirable

- Individuals are less willing to *outwardly display* their partisanship

The Influence of Social Desirability in the Rise of Political Independents

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

Negative images of partisanship decrease the social desirability of partisans and increase reports of independence

Hypothesis 2:

High self monitors are particularly susceptible to adjusting their reported partisanship

Empirical Test: A Survey Experiment

- YouGov sample of 800

- Post-Election (Feb 2013)

- Measures of partisanship in January 2012

Survey Procedure:

Respondents randomly assigned to read one news article:

- Article about partisan cooperation in Washington

- Article about partisan bickering in Washington

- Article about Groundhog Day (control)

The Influence of Social Desirability in the Rise of Political Independents

Consequence of Negative Image of Partisans

- **High self-monitors identify as independent after receiving negative partisanship stimulus**

But:

- No changes in ideology
- No change in issue preferences

Results robust when we control for:

- Gender
- Education
- Age
- Geographic location
- Ideology (one year ago)

The Influence of Social Desirability in the Rise of Political Independents

Does Question Wording Influence Social Desirability Bias?

- **Gallup, Pew:** "In politics, as of today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or an independent?

- **ANES, ABC News/*Washington Post*:** "Generally speaking, do you usually consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, an independent or what?"

Does Question Wording Influence Social Desirability Bias?

- **Gallup, Pew:** "In politics, as of today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or an independent?

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# The Influence of Social Desirability in the Rise of Political Independents

Does Question Wording Influence Social Desirability Bias?

Survey Procedure:

1. Randomly assigned to read one news article:
   - Article about the importance of partisans
   - Article about partisan bickering in Washington
   - Article about Groundhog Day (control)

2. Respondents randomly assigned to
   - "As of today…"
   - "Generally speaking…"

3. Measure partisanship

The Influence of Social Desirability in the Rise of Political Independents

Independents Across Conditions
"As of today…" v. "Generally speaking…"
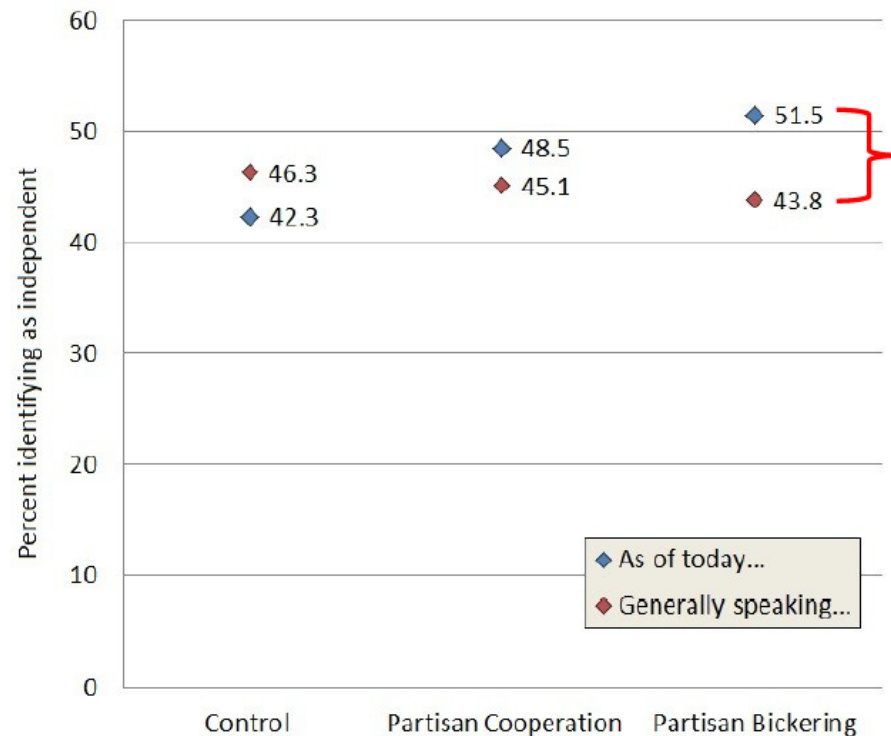
"As of today" leads to more reports of independents following the bickering treatment, compared to "Generally speaking".

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